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MR. J. H. KORTLANDT
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 18, 1959

SUBJECT:

The Berlin Situation

FEB 27 1959

PARTICIPANTS:

Ambassador Paul Koht of Norway
 Mr. Robert Murphy - Deputy Under Secretary of State
 Mr. William Kerrigan - BNA

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Ambassador Koht asked Mr. Murphy his views on the advisability of bringing the Berlin problem before the UN. Mr. Murphy responded that there were clearly pros and cons to the question. For his part, he felt that the psychological effect of Mr. Dulles' idea on handling the Berlin problem was all to the good - that is, utilizing the time remaining to us before the Soviets' set deadline of May 27, to build up understanding of the problem and obtaining the support of the public for our position. This is of some importance because there is some difficulty in making immediately clear the necessity of possibly having to go to war over "stamping a piece of paper". This is an ostensibly small matter that however contains in it principles of the greatest importance.

As for going to the UN, we could reasonably assume that after some discussion of the Berlin matter in the Security Council there would be a Soviet veto on any sort of proposed line of action, and the question no doubt would then be thrown into the General Assembly. In the course of possibly lengthy and inconclusive debate various lines of action could well be suggested then amended, obscured and otherwise rendered innocuous and ineffective. It is an entirely proper subject

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for consideration in the UN, and we have a very sound legal position as regards our rights of entry into Berlin. It is also the fact that considerable delay while discussions take place would pose no significant problems of a practical nature, since the supply situation for the Berlin garrisons of the three western powers is very good.

Ambassador Koht said that in recent talks with Willy Brandt, the Mayor of West Berlin, he had the impression that Brandt, in common with other Germans, was not very anxious to temporize. Mr. Murphy responded that Willy Brandt's feelings about the matter were understandable, and certainly the feeling of a Berliner for the situation would be charged with emotion. However, it was his personal opinion that we ought to use the time at our disposal to build up public opinion and support of whatever action might later become necessary there. This is needed not only in Berlin and Germany, but also in the United Kingdom. The French, however, are sound and firm on this question and we consider this a hopeful sign, considering General de Gaulle's and France's other commitments in North Africa.

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